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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Radio Service
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT Monday, January 23, 1939

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "THE U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND THE HOMEMAKER." Information from the Secretary's Annual Report 1938.

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I have asked our Washington reporter to tell us something about types of work now going on in the Department which touch the farm home directly.

She writes:

"Secretary Wallace's annual report, and the annual reports of the different bureaus, were issued during December. I believe I can best supply the information you ask for by running through some of these reports, beginning with the general view of the Department's activities given by the Secretary.

"At first glance Secretary Wallace's discussion of the programs now under way seems to be wholly concerned with national, rather than individual problems. Of course the actions on national problems do concern the individual for his welfare is tied up with national welfare. But a careful reading shows that a number of these definitely affect the welfare of the farm home and are therefore of interest to homemakers.

"For example, every woman who drives or rides in a car or who sends her children to school in a bus has a personal interest in the improvement of rural highways and the measures taken to make them safer. The passing of the Food, Drug, and Cosmetics Act touches every pantry, medicine cabinet, and dressing table in the country, rural and urban. The average woman may know little about farm machinery or drainage problems, but when agricultural engineers talk about sanitation and the alarming depreciation of rural houses, she wants to know what can be done about the situation."

The Washington letter continues:

"Of course I looked first to see what the Secretary had to say about the work of the Bureau of Home Economics. Quoting him:

"'The Bureau of Home Economics is the only bureau in this department that focuses its entire program of research and education on the conservation and development of human resources. It endeavors to determine human needs for food, clothing, housing, and other goods and services, and to acquaint both consumers and producers with the requirements.... Important investigations in the bureau have to do with housing and its bearing on family life. They seek to determine what sort of homes best suit the needs of everyday living..... also study household equipment and furnishings..... textiles and clothing.'

"The Secretary expresses much interest in the study of family living that was made in 64 farm counties and in 140 villages and 19 small cities. He mentions some of the facts about which I have already written you--the information that has been obtained on farm incomes, both in cash and in food, fuel and other home-raised products; also on what farm people spend their money for at different income levels. At my first opportunity I shall write you in more detail about the year's work of the Bureau of Home Economics." (I am still reading from our Washington letter.)

"Next among those in the Department of Agriculture whose work touches the farm homemaker closely are the Extension workers--the home demonstration agents and club agents. The Secretary notes that in practically all States extension workers have shifted their emphasis from specialized subjects to the whole farm approach. Probably those who are members of home demonstration clubs have already noticed this. Live-at-home programs and canning budgets have related food gardens, poultry flocks, and the family cow, to the newer knowledge of good nutrition. Farm and home accounts have been studied together to appraise the family's net worth. Four-H club projects have been more closely tied to the farm and home program.

"Recognition of the problems of the underprivileged groups in agriculture has led to the establishment of the Farm Security Administration, which seeks to rehabilitate rural families that have reached bottom. This administration is also concerned with the farm tenancy problem. The Secretary's report describes the typical procedure in making farm loans to either of these groups.

"In the Secretary's review of the developments in animal industry, I'll just mention two. Bovine tuberculosis is a menace to human health. Through the efforts of the Bureau of Animal Industry, only one State now remains outside of the accredited list of tuberculosis-free areas. And while participants in the national poultry improvement plan as sponsored by this bureau are for the most part progressive operators of commercial flocks and poultry establishments, including hatcheries, the rural woman who has a few hens at home can derive much benefit by following the principles embodied in this plan.

"In the field of plant research, women's interest has been largely in vegetables, fruits, and decorative plants. Plant science lately has been closely linked with nutrition..... with improved methods of food preservation and distribution, and other economic aspects of the subject, of which I'll write more later on.

"I must save for another letter the Secretary's comments on the research in insect pest control, on the utilization of dairy wastes such as skim milk and whey, and the wide field of chemical research to find new industrial uses for agricultural products. All these subjects are of interest to intelligent women everywhere."

That concludes our Washington reporter's letter for this week.

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